

Minutes

Transportation Accessibility Advisory Committee



Meeting date: April 2, 2025

Time: 12:30 PM

Location: 390 Robert Street

Members present:

- ☐ Chair, David Fenley, at large
- ☒ Vice Chair, Darrell Paulsen, Precinct F
- ☐ Sam Jasmine, Precinct A
- ☐ Christopher Bates, Precinct B
- ☒ Patsy Murphy, Precinct C
- ☒ Ken Rodgers, Precinct D
- ☐ Jeffrey Dains, Precinct E
- ☒ Kari Sheldon, Precinct G

- ☒ Michele Severson, MCD
- ☒ Erik Henriksen, MCD
- ☐ Diane Graham-Raff, MAAA
- ☒ Patty Thorsen, MAAA
- ☐ Heidi Myhre, MCCD
- ☒ Claudia Fuglie, MCCD
- ☐ Richard Rowen, AARP MN

Ex-officio:

- ☐ Andy Streasick, Metro Mobility
- ☒ Cheryl Schmidt, Metro Mobility Service Center (interim)
- ☒ Douglas Cook, Metro Transit Customer Advocate
- ☐ Anjuli Cameron, Metropolitan Council

☐ = present, E = excused

Dakota Land, Water, and People Acknowledgment

The Metropolitan Council acknowledges that the land we currently call Minnesota and specifically the seven-county region is the ancestral homeland of the Dakota Oyate who are present and active contributors to our thriving region. As part of the Metropolitan Council's commitment to address the unresolved legacy of genocide, dispossession, and settler colonialism and the fact that government institutions, including the Metropolitan Council, benefitted economically, politically, and institutionally after the forceable removal of the Dakota Oyate, the Metropolitan Council is dedicated to instilling Land, Water, and People Commitments in regional policy. These commitments support the Dakota Oyate, the eleven federally recognized Tribes in Minnesota, Ho-Chunk Nation, and the American Indian Communities representing over 150 diverse Tribal Nations that call the seven-county region home.

Call to order

A quorum not present, Committee Chair Fenley called the regular meeting of the Transportation Accessibility Advisory Committee to order at 12:36 p.m.

Dakota Land, Water, and People Acknowledgment

The Dakota Land, Water, and People Acknowledgment was read by Council Member Sheldon.

Business and information items

1. A presentation regarding **Network Now** was presented by Cyndi Harper and Mark Christianson from Metro Transit. Harper began the presentation by providing background on the *Network Now* project, a comprehensive effort to redesign Metro Transit's route structure. The project has been underway for over two years and was recently approved by the full Metropolitan Council. While no action was requested of the TAAC at this time, Harper emphasized the importance of returning to the committee to close the loop and share updates following recent public feedback and the Council's final decision.

Mark Christensen then provided a detailed overview of the finalized *Network Now* framework, which outlines service improvements planned between 2025 and 2027. These improvements

include the redesign of routes, expanded service frequency and hours, investments in Metro Line and microtransit service, and decisions on routes that have been suspended since 2020. The plan also involves associated facility closures. The approach was informed by network performance data dating back to 2019, as well as regional transit policy guidance from the Metropolitan Council's Transportation Policy Plan.

Public engagement played a significant role in shaping the final plan. In 2024 alone, Metro Transit held 25 community events—including several conducted in other languages—and 35 municipal and county briefings, along with 15 additional committee and partner presentations. Staff spent over 420 hours conducting direct outreach to riders at transit centers and on board buses. Over 4,000 customers were engaged through printed materials and conversations, and digital outreach via social media, newsletters, and rider alerts was also heavily utilized. In total, approximately 1,600 formal comments were received, with nearly 29% of responses coming from individuals with disabilities.

Based on community input, a number of changes were made to the draft framework. These included increased investments in the Metro Network, such as the addition of Phase 2 of the G Line, which will extend south of downtown St. Paul and is scheduled for 2028, and an extension of the Gold Line to downtown Minneapolis with 10-minute frequency, planned for 2027. Riders requested more frequent and longer-running service, which led to longer spans of high-frequency service on six routes, including earlier start times and later end times. Weekend frequency was improved on 11 routes to reflect evolving travel patterns that show consistent use across weekdays and weekends.

There were also requests for more express service throughout the day. As a result, five key express routes will offer 15-minute service during rush hours and hourly service midday. Later evening service was also added, including trips after 1:00 a.m. on Routes 10, 18, and the C and D lines. To better connect suburban areas, the plan includes increased frequency and restoration of service on several suburban local routes. Most will now run every 30 minutes or better, and all will run at least every 60 minutes. Additionally, several previously proposed route eliminations were reversed, and routes 271, 672, 758, 763, 765, and 766 will be retained.

Simplification of the system was another key theme of feedback. In response, Metro Transit reduced branching and routing complexity on several routes to make the system more intuitive and accessible. Although requests for more microtransit service were acknowledged, implementation will depend on workforce capacity. The agency remains committed to developing new microtransit zones as resources allow.

As of the March 2025 quarterly service change, Metro Transit expects to have increased in-service hours by 7% compared to 2023 levels. By the end of 2027, the transit network will surpass the number of in-service hours offered in 2019, demonstrating not just a recovery from pandemic-era reductions, but growth beyond previous levels. A total of 25 routes will see improvements by March 2025, marking a significant early milestone in the framework's multi-year rollout.

A map was shown highlighting the new and existing high-frequency routes. These are defined as routes with service every 15 minutes or better, primarily between 11:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. on weekdays. The map included arterial BRT lines (e.g., Blue, Green, Orange, and Gold), local routes (shown in purple), and Metro Micro zones (indicated as green areas). These Micro zones are intended to offer more flexible and localized service options across the region. New weekday high-frequency service was announced on the Gold Line, including an extension to downtown Minneapolis. Additional expansions such as the Green Line extension, and new ABRT routes—the E Line and G Line—were also presented. Several traditional bus routes (22, 51, 74, 587, and 515) will also benefit from increased frequency.

A second map illustrated the number of weekly trips planned by 2027, using varying line thicknesses to denote frequency. In this map, red lines indicated discontinued service from the pre-pandemic era, orange lines showed reductions compared to 2023, and blue lines



represented new or expanded service under *Network Now*. The presenters emphasized that the thicker the line, the greater the number of trips. Overall, this visual demonstrated the region's shift in transit investments toward higher-frequency, more reliable service in areas of increased demand.

Within the framework, over 70 routes will see increased frequency or service span. Of these, 26 routes will operate at 15-minute intervals or better, light rail lines will run every 10 minutes, and eight new Micro zones will be created. Simultaneously, Metro Transit plans to discontinue 50 routes—primarily express commuter services that have not returned since the pandemic—and to restore 12 previously suspended routes. The service changes will be implemented incrementally as part of Metro Transit's regular quarterly service changes from 2025 through 2027. Implementation sequencing will depend on fleet availability, staffing levels, and rider demand. The agency also intends to decommission related infrastructure, such as signage and park-and-rides, and will release a progress report in 2026 to assess the effectiveness and impact of these changes.

Attendees were reminded that the full project report, including appendices with route-by-route changes, is available at metrotransit.org/networknow. The appendices include detailed breakdowns for each affected route. The committee was invited to provide feedback or ask questions about the materials.

Member Rodgers provided feedback on accessibility concerns regarding the presentation. He pointed out that maps relying on line thickness to indicate data are not screen-reader compatible. He recommended using symbols or letters instead, as screen readers cannot interpret graphic features like boldness or thickness. He also inquired whether the appendices were formatted in accessible tables or structured data.

The presenters acknowledged the concern and appreciated the feedback. They explained that the materials on the Metro Transit website include alt text and were designed to meet accessibility requirements. However, they offered to provide additional text descriptions of the maps and charts upon request. They agreed to revisit the accessibility of the presentation slides, particularly those shown during the meeting, to ensure that key data could be conveyed via screen readers.

Member Murphy asked what is a Metro Micro zone. Staff explained it is like “Uber but with a bus.” It helps expand the service area of the Gold Line and the A Line. There are currently plans to add about 2 areas a year. It differs from existing circular routes by being more demand based. Member Fuglie asked about fares. Staff answered they are the same fares as fixed route rides. All vehicles are accessible, when booking a ride, the app or phone operator inquires about mobility devices to ensure space.

2. Julie Sellner the **new customer Service Manager from Metro Mobility** introduced herself. She has previously worked for 24 years in public transit with Transdev and FirstTransit. Public transit is “in her heart.”

Vice-chair Paulsen stated that there hasn't been regular updates from Metro Mobility for some time whereas they used to get them on a regular basis. Member Rodgers stated that the point of the committee is oversight for Metro Mobility. He requested regular ongoing data and recommendation presentations.

Julie Sellner committed to doing so and will present next month.

3. Vice-Chair Paulsen discussed renewing the **Operator Recognition Award**. The committee gave out five awards in 2023, one for each provider, one Metro Transit driver, and one reservationist. Vice-Chair Paulsen stated he wants to have some names by this summer.

Member Rodgers expressed concern about just the TAAC picking them. He suggested asking the greater ridership for stories while riding. Member Thorsen asked if we can get access to online feedback. Julie Sellner stated they do not have all the feedback, that is stored with each provider.



Member Rodgers suggested that there should be a small working group established to bring it back to the committee.

Reports

Subcommittee

1. Blue Line – Ken Rodgers

Next meeting is next Wednesday. Will discuss the stop by North Memorial Hospital. The at-grade option might disrupt ambulance traffic.

2. Gold Line – Darrell Paulsen

Add recap of reports discussion.

3. Purple Line – Darrell Paulsen

Nothing new. Meeting was cancelled. The mayor of Maplewood is against the project.

Public invitation

No public comment

Member comment

Member Fuglie had a comment about possible inefficiencies with routing of Metro Mobility vehicles. Julie Sellner stated there could be several factors that go into routing, but encouraged calling into the Metro Mobility Service Center with any feedback.

Adjournment

Business completed; the meeting adjourned at 2:02 p.m.

Certification

I hereby certify that the foregoing narrative and exhibits constitute a true and accurate record of the Transportation Accessibility Advisory Committee meeting of April 2, 2025.

Approved this 4th day of June 2025.

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